Selected Works Volume 1

Sergei Eisenstein

Writings, 1922–1934

Edited and translated by

Richard Taylor

I.B.TAURIS

SERGEI EISENSTEIN

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VOLUME I

Writings, 1922–34

Sergei Eisenstein
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General Editor: Richard Taylor

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Writings, 1922–34
Edited and translated by Richard Taylor

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Towards a Theory of Montage
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RICHARD TAYLOR

I.B. TAURIS

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R.T.

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General Editor's Preface

Sergei Eisenstein is by general consent the most important single figure in the history of cinema. His contribution to the practice of film-making is universally acknowledged and his films, from *The Strike* to *Ivan the Terrible* are well known, if not always as widely shown as we might assume. But the bulk of Eisenstein's theoretical writings has remained largely inaccessible and, despite the invaluable efforts of Jay Leyda in particular, the English-speaking world has only a partial acquaintance with the ideas that underlay his films.

It is the primary purpose of this edition to make available the most important of Eisenstein's writings in a comprehensive and scholarly, but nevertheless accessible, form to the English-speaking reader for the first time. The nature of those writings posed considerable editorial problems concerning the organisation of the volumes in the series. Different editions in different languages have resorted to different solutions. The German edition is grouped around the films, the French and Italian editions are arranged thematically, while the Russian edition from which all other versions ultimately derive their inspiration is arranged in a manner that can only be described as esoteric. In this edition we have opted wherever possible for a chronological approach: the ultimate justification is quite simply that this is the order in which Eisenstein himself wrote and therefore the order which enables the reader most easily to trace the development of his ideas. Sometimes the sheer amount of material has rendered a chronological approach unsustainable, as in the second volume, *Towards a Theory of Montage*: there understanding is better served by grouping Eisenstein's sometimes fragmentary and often unfinished writings on montage from the 1930s and 1940s together in one large volume. But the first and third volumes in this edition follow his career from his first published article in November 1922 to the end of 1934 and then from the Party Conference on Cinema in January 1935 until his death in February 1948. The documents have been chosen not merely to record the development of his aesthetic ideas but also to illuminate the context in which that development occurred. Although each volume focuses on Eisenstein's writings on film, the thoughts he expressed on theatre and the other arts and on politics and current events have been included wherever relevant to illustrate that Eisenstein was not just an artist but a *Soviet* artist, with all that that entailed in the thirty turbulent years after the October Revolution.

It is the aim of this edition to make Eisenstein and his ideas more accessible to the English-speaking reader. If the organisation of the volumes or the quality of the translations or the annotation obstructs that purpose, then we shall not only have failed in our duty to the reader, we shall have failed in our responsibility towards Eisenstein.

RICHARD TAYLOR
Swansea, Wales, June 1987

Introduction

Eisenstein: On Socialism, Soviet Cinema and Reel Life

In 1911 the popular Russian writer Leonid Andreyev, enthusing about the potential of what he called 'the miraculous cinema', predicted:

> There will be no limits to the freedom of an author creating action, his imagination will have been enriched – and new cinema dramatists, as yet unknown talents and geniuses, will emerge. A cinema Shakespeare, after abandoning the inconvenience of words, will deepen and broaden action to such an extent, will find such new and unexpected combinations for it, that it will become as expressive as speech and at the same time it will convince with the incomparable conviction that is inherent only in the visible and the tangible.[1]

If there was one person who could properly lay claim to the title of 'cinema Shakespeare' it would have to be Eisenstein. His position in the development of cinema as an art form was in many ways similar to that of Shakespeare in the development of modern drama and it was certainly as seminal. But, unlike Shakespeare, Eisenstein was more than the leading practitioner of his art: he was also its principal theorist. He was therefore not only cinema's Shakespeare: he was also in some sense its Stanislavsky, its Brecht – or, perhaps most appropriately, its Meyerhold.[2]

Eisenstein has become a myth. He has been acclaimed as a genius, as the greatest film-maker of all time and as one of the great philosophers of art of our century. More has been written about him than about any other film director and he himself wrote more than any other film director both about his own work and about his medium. It is therefore a rather daunting task to introduce the first volume of Eisenstein's *Writings* in this edition. Until now the English-speaking reader has in a sense had to read Eisenstein backwards: his later writings were published first and his earlier work has appeared only partially and gradually in scattered tomes. The chronological order of the present volume enables us to trace the organic development of Eisenstein's thought more clearly. In the limited space available all that I can hope to do is to suggest some continuities in his argument and some avenues for further exploration. But I want above all to argue that there is a very considerable coherence and consistency in Eisenstein's thought even if ultimately his theory of art remained both partial and fragmentary.[3] I shall confine myself to the period covered by this first volume, that is the period until the end of 1934, and, since the basic details of Eisenstein's biography are well known, I shall refer to them only in so far as they help us to understand the development of his ideas.

Eisenstein's first involvement in the performing arts was, of course, theatrical rather than cinematic: he came to cinema through theatre and

through an increasing frustration, shared with many others at that time, with theatre's limitations. But his artistic activity began as a child with drawings and sketches and he continued to produce these, sometimes in connection with his film and theatre work and sometimes not, throughout his adult life. It was his draughtsmanship that provided him with the additional income as a student that enabled him to pursue his interest in theatre[4] and ultimately to break away from the engineering career that his father had mapped out for him, via the Red Army into theatre itself. In this respect Eisenstein was typical of other Soviet artists of the time: the October Revolution not only broke down the old social, economic and political order, it also overthrew the traditional notions of art and of the arts. If one thing characterises the revolutionary Soviet artists of the 1920s it is the relative ease with which they moved from one art form to another, from literature to scriptwriting, from painting to set design – in Eisenstein's case from sketching through set design and stage direction to film-making – and this in turn helps to explain the ease with which they drew upon the techniques of those various art forms to enhance the effectiveness of their own activity in one particular form. It was Eisenstein's association with the Petrograd-based Factory of the Eccentric Actor (FEKS)[5] that convinced him of the utility of circus forms. While Grigori Kozintsev's contribution to the FEKS manifesto, 'Eccentrism', demanded 'art without a capital letter, a pedestal or a fig-leaf',[6] Leonid Trauberg's denounced 'serious people in galoshes'.

> The slogan of their time is: 'Revolution brings tasteful art out of the palaces and on to the streets!' It's a religious procession, take off your hats, just imagine it!
>
> Guilty, comrades! Not that one! To the ABC! From the streets into the palaces with the revolution! The streets bring revolution to art. Our street mud now is circus, cinema, music-hall, Pinkerton.[7]

These preoccupations are reflected in the first document in this collection. 'The Eighth Art', written in November 1922 by Eisenstein and Yutkevich (who had been one of the founder members of the FEKS) (pp. 29-32). In this, the first of Eisenstein's published articles, the techniques of the circus (Eccentrism), of the detective story (Pinkerton) and of Chaplin were held up as examples: indeed, it was Chaplin who was credited with having given cinema 'the eighth seat in the Council of the Muses', of having, in other words, 'moved from the streets into the palaces with the revolution'. The streets had indeed brought revolution to art.

The influence of Eccentrism was just as strong in 'The Montage of Attractions', Eisenstein's first major theoretical work, published in 1923 (pp. 33-38). Although his concern here was with the methods by which *theatre* could be made more effective, many of the arguments used were later to be applied to *cinema*, when theatre's limitations had proved all too apparent. Kozintsev had, on behalf of FEKS, proclaimed:

> Life requires art that is
> *hyperbolically crude, dumbfounding, nerve-wracking, openly utilitarian, mechanically exact, momentary, rapid,*
> otherwise no-one will hear, see or stop.[8]

Eisenstein argued that 'the moulding of the audience in a desired direction (or mood) is the task of every utilitarian theatre'. But, whereas Kozintsev proposed a hegemony of the new 'low' art forms to the exclusion of the traditional 'high' forms, encapsulated in the slogan, 'We prefer Charlie's arse to Eleonore Duse's hands,'[9] Eisenstein was prepared to utilise whatever was to prove most *effective*:

> all the parts that constitute the apparatus of theatre (Ostuzhev's 'chatter' no more than the colour of the prima donna's tights, a roll on the drums just as much as Romeo's soliloquy, the cricket on the hearth no less than a salvo under the seats of the auditorium) because, despite their differences, they all lead to one thing – which their presence legitimates – to their common quality of *attraction*.

The concept of attractions was central to Eisenstein's thought at this time and was to recur in different guises throughout his later career. The ends justified the means and for Eisenstein the ends were always *ultimately* ideological, even if they were frequently expressed in aesthetic terms:

> An attraction . . . is any aggressive moment in theatre, i.e. any element of it that subjects the audience to emotional or psychological influence, verified by experience and mathematically calculated to produce specific emotional shocks in the spectator in their proper order within the whole. These shocks provide the only opportunity of perceiving the ideological aspect of what is being shown, the final ideological conclusion.

The attraction was 'an independent and primary element in structuring the show': it derived its coherence from the perception of the 'final ideological conclusion' that it facilitated.

Eisenstein reiterated the purpose of the attraction in 'The Montage of Film Attractions', written in 1924 but not published in his lifetime (pp. 39-58):

> An attraction . . . is in our understanding any demonstrable fact (an action, an object, a phenomenon, a conscious combination, and so on) that is known and proven to exercise a definite effect on the attention and emotions of the audience and that, combined with others, possesses the characteristic of concentrating the audience's emotions in any direction dictated by the production's purpose.

Without this overarching purpose the independent and primary elements would fall apart, as in the work of Vertov and the Cine-Eyes, which Eisenstein characterised at this stage as a mere 'montage of separate sequences'. Each montage element, each attraction, had to contribute towards the total effect of the work. These attractions worked on the audience's psyche through their associations and through chains of such associations: the effect of each attraction depended to a great extent on its montage context, on the relationship of each individual shot and its associations to the associations of the shots that surrounded it. Eisenstein chose the slaughter sequence from *The Strike* to illustrate his point.

In 'The Montage of Film Attractions' Eisenstein also broached the problem of the role of the script in film-making. Given his experiences in making *The Strike* and those he was to have with *The Battleship Potemkin*, it is perhaps hardly surprising to find him describing the script as 'a "prescription" that summarises the general projected emotional effect on the audience and the pressure that will inevitably be exerted on the audience's psyche' and arguing:

> More often than not, given our scriptwriters' utterly feeble approach to the construction of a script, this task falls entirely to the director. The transposition of the theme into a chain of attractions with a previously determined end effect is the definition we have given of a director's work. The presence or absence of a written script is by no means all that important.

The script was justified only if it performed a useful function in furthering the effectiveness of the film, in facilitating the communication of its ideological purpose.

This too was the actor's role and Eisenstein judged the concept of the *naturshchik* or model actor[10] accordingly. In so far as the model actor succeeded in exposing the underlying motivation of a character through the expressiveness of his external movements, his technique was justified. He discerned a productive conflict in the model actor between the desires of the actor and the inertia of his body: this notion of conflict contained the germ of the idea of the centrality of conflict to art that Eisenstein was to develop later. It also presaged the perception of montage as a means of resolving such conflict through the Marxist notion of the dialectic (even if it had come down to Eisenstein in a rather functional, perhaps even mechanistic, version through Engels and Lenin): thesis – antithesis – synthesis. The test for all the various elements employed in cinema was then, as it was to be later, its efficiency in communicating the purpose of the film:

> An idea expressed in its completeness is photogenic; that is, an object is photogenic when it corresponds most closely to the idea that it embodies. (A car is more photogenic than a cart because its whole

> structure corresponds more closely to its purpose of transportation, and so on.)[11]

The montage of attractions in cinema was justified by its utility, just as it had previously been justified in theatre as long as it had been effective in that medium.

By the time that Eisenstein wrote 'The Problem of the Materialist Approach to Form' (pp. 59-64) he had already completed his first feature-length film, *The Strike*. He claimed that the film represented 'an ideological victory in the field of form' because of its

> discovery of the manufacturing logic and the exposition of the technique of the methods of struggle as of a 'living' current process that knows no inviolable rules other than its final aim and the methods that are varied and devised at a particular moment according to the conditions and the balance of forces at that particular phase of the struggle.

Here again the purpose was the overriding consideration. Before *The Strike*, he argued, cinema had absorbed 'the external characteristics of "neighbouring arts"' but the 'revolutionary quality' of *The Strike* lay in the fact that its 'renewing principle' was a 'directly utilitarian' one and, more specifically, an *industrial* one. Eisenstein denied a conflict of interest between form and content but argued instead that revolutionary form would derive from revolutionary ideology, just as the locomotive had derived from the discovery of steam as a motive power:

> It is not by 'revolutionising' the forms of the stage-coach that the locomotive is created but through a proper technical calculation of the practical emergence of a *new and previously non-existent kind of energy* – steam. It is not the 'research' for forms that correspond to the new content but the logical *realisation of all the phases of the technical production of a work of art consonant with* the 'new *kind* of energy' – the *ruling ideology* – that will produce the forms of revolutionary art.

The decisive factor 'for art in general and revolutionary art in particular' was the 'maximum intensification of the emotional seizure of the audience' and 'a formal approach that is *correctly* conducted in Marxist terms [and that] results in an ideologically valuable and socially useful product'. Eisenstein argued that formal effectiveness was impotent if it was not thematically effective and in this context he renewed his attack on the work of Vertov and the Cine-Eyes as 'primitive Impressionism'. He compared art, a 'tractor ploughing over the audience's psyche', with Vertov's position, the '*reductio ad absurdum* of the technical methods that are valid for newsreel', and noted the different effect of 'the abattoir that is *recorded* in *Cine-Eyes* and *gorily effective* in *The Strike*'.

He attributed the difference to the method by which in *The Strike* he had snatched 'fragments from our surroundings according to a conscious and predetermined plan calculated to launch them at the audience in the appropriate combination, to subjugate it to the appropriate association with the obvious final ideological motivation.'

The Cine-Eyes, with their view of the essence of cinema as 'life caught unawares', were accused of 'passionless representation', of 'the fixing of phenomena that goes no further than fixing the audience's attention' rather than 'ploughing the audience's psyche'. By implication Eisenstein was here engaging in the same kind of critique of the Cine-Eyes as those who were later to accuse them of empty Formalism.[12] Their work certainly had form, but it lacked ideological direction: 'It is not a "Cine-Eye" that we need but a "Cine-Fist".'

The Strike, or rather the vitriolic dispute over the authorship of the film,[13] also marked the end of Eisenstein's association with Proletkult, which had exerted a formative influence on him. With the severing of this link, he was in a sense cast adrift not only from the Proletkult collective but from other artistic groupings. He continued to play a leading part in LEF but that was an organisation broad enough to encompass both him and the Cine-Eyes. A sense of creeping isolation might help to explain why Eisenstein became more dogmatic in 'The Method of Making a Workers' Film' (pp. 65-66). He insisted that, 'There is *one* method for making *any* film: the montage of attractions.' He re-defined the content of a film as 'the socially useful emotional and psychological effect that infects the audience and is composed of a chain of suitably directed stimulants'. The determination of the purpose of the film defined its class character and Eisenstein reiterated his earlier argument that without that purpose the individual attractions would not function as a totality but as essentially counter-revolutionary art for art's sake.

In January 1926 Eisenstein's second feature-length film, *The Battleship Potemkin*, was given its première. It was not popular with Soviet audiences reared on the same diet of popular Hollywood films as their counterparts in the West. But when it reached the West it created a sensation amongst the intelligentsia and a *succès de scandale* in the press because of attempts to censor it or suppress it altogether.[14] Eisenstein became an international celebrity and the principal ambassador abroad of Soviet art. He made his first visit abroad as an adult by going to Berlin to promote the film and had his first taste of life in the West. His comparisons between film-making in the Soviet Union and in Germany were conveyed in his interview with the *Berliner Tageblatt* (pp. 74-76) and in 'The German Cinema. A Traveller's Impressions' (pp. 85-88). But it was *Potemkin* that dominated Soviet cinema in 1926 and *Potemkin* that gave him a reputation and raised expectations that he perhaps never subsequently fulfilled, nor could have fulfilled.

'Constanţa (Whither *The Battleship Potemkin*)' was Eisenstein's first attempt to explain the intentions and significance of what was to become his

most famous film (pp. 67-70). He argued that *Potemkin* marked an advance on *The Strike* because *'The Strike* is a treatise; *Potemkin* is a hymn.' Citing the roaring lions as his example, he suggested that in his latest work, 'the object is not just an illustration acting as an object (an accordion, a toilet); the object is psychologised both by way of its positioning and in its very presentation.' This represented a further distancing from the Vertov school and, indeed, from what Eisenstein now called 'the Cine-Eye qualities of *The Strike*'. He explained the modification of his methods by arguing:

> There is one thing we have no right to do and that is to *make generalisations*. The current phase of audience reaction determines our methods of influence: what it reacts to. Without this *there can be no influential art and certainly no art with maximum influence*.

It was once more a matter of the end justifying the means: 'Art admits *all* methods except those that fail to achieve their end.' In 'The German Cinema' Eisenstein mocked the view of *Potemkin*, expressed to him in Germany, that there were 'simply not enough men and women in love with one another'. In 'Constanţa' he asserted that the end of art, at least of Soviet art, was not to lull the audience (a point reiterated in his interview with the *Berliner Tageblatt*) but to provoke and challenge it: 'art always exacerbates a current conflict rather than distracting audiences from it'. *Potemkin*, by 'psychologising' objects, marked a logical progression from the chains of associations that he had identified at an earlier stage in the development of his ideas:

> For those of us who take our stand on the basis of the montage of attractions, this change is neither an overturning of the foundations of cinema nor a change in course in understanding our cinema. For us it is the next consecutive stage of attraction – the next tactical manoeuvre in the attack on the audience under the slogan of October.

Eisenstein thus felt that his arguments, despite their modification, retained an underlying coherence and consistency. It is not therefore surprising to find him developing his earlier statements on the model actor in 'However Odd – Khokhlova!' (pp. 71-73). Comparing the role of women in Soviet and Western cinema, Eisenstein presented the actress Alexandra Khokhlova, the archetypal example of the *naturshchik*, as a specifically Soviet phenomenon. His essential functionalism led him to believe that Soviet cinema should play to its strengths, Khokhlova being one of them: 'To keep Khokhlova, who is, I repeat, perhaps our only original actress . . . "veiled" is simply criminal.'

But the two most important writings from 1926 are undoubtedly 'Béla Forgets the Scissors' (pp. 77-81) and 'The Two Skulls of Alexander the Great' (pp. 82-84). The first was a response to an article by the Hungarian critic Béla Balázs in which he had argued that the role of the cameraman was central to the specificity of cinema. Eisenstein viewed this, from his

own experience of German cinema, as a reflection of German conditions. He characterised what he termed Balázs's 'starism' as

> the individualism of bourgeois countries in general. They do not think beyond this in the West. Someone has to be the 'star'. *One* person. Yesterday it was the actor. This time let's say it's the cameraman. Tomorrow it will be the lighting technician.

By contrast with the Soviet Union, in the West 'the idea that a film is the result of *collective* efforts goes to the devil.' Balázs's individualism had led him to an erroneous belief in 'the shot itself as "star"'. Eisenstein, on the other hand, repeated his view that it was montage, which enabled the individual shot to be seen in the context of a particular sequence that gave it meaning through association – what he here called 'contextual confrontation' – that defined the specificity of cinema.

In 'The Two Skulls' Eisenstein re-examined the relationship between cinema and theatre, comparing them to the skulls of Alexander the Great at different ages. His arguments very much reflected the progress of his own career. While cinema had derived originally from theatre ('Cinema is the contemporary stage of theatre. The next, consecutive phase.'[15]), it was an offshoot that had outgrown its parent plant. As an effective medium theatre was finished and the past role of theatre would in future 'be fulfilled by by-passing theatre'. Using an analogy he had employed before, Eisenstein called for efforts to be concentrated on developing cinema at the expense of theatre:

> There's no point in perfecting the wooden plough. The tractor has been invented. Drawing attention to the success of tractorisation, i.e. to cinema, and organising life through clubs are the task of every serious theatre worker.

The analogy with the plough and the tractor was not fortuitous, for Eisenstein was already working on his next film, *The General Line*, which dealt with collectivisation in the Soviet countryside. Although this film is still not nearly as well known as his much more controversial anniversary film, *October*, Eisenstein considered it much more important. His view is summed up in his remark in 'Give Us a State Plan' (pp. 89-94): '*October* was an overtime job: our main job was and is *The General Line*, a film that we consider to be the next new stage in our film work.'

That article was largely an account of Eisenstein's working methods to date. He was principally concerned to reiterate his earlier statements on the need to calculate the content of a film for maximum effect in the same way that a loaded train is despatched to its destination. He called again for unified central control of film: 'The tractors whose movements are not organised by a single will do not plough the fields.' If the fields were not ploughed, nor

would the audience's psyche be ploughed. Planning was the only answer: 'When that happens the freight trains will perhaps arrive at their destinations with a full and valuable load.' It was a call that was to be taken up by the Party Conference on Cinema that was held in March 1928. But by December 1927, when the article was published, neither of Eisenstein's freight trains had yet arrived at their destinations. *The General Line* had been interrupted by the making of *October*, but *October*, although completed, had still to be re-edited for general release. The attacks on Eisenstein's anniversary film were to mark the beginning of a downward slide from the apparently unassailable position in which *Potemkin* had placed him.

The year 1928 marked a turning-point in the history of Soviet cinema. The tenth anniversary of the October Revolution had focused attention on the continuing failure of the authorities to organise cinema as an effective ideological weapon, on their failure to effect the kind of centralised control that Eisenstein had called for. Cinema audiences were still being fed a diet of the kind of fiction films that Eisenstein and other intellectual film-makers despised, the kind of films that imitated the commercial films produced in the West. In the words of one film journal, Soviet cinema had been 'allowed . . . to drift on the Soviet sea "rudderless and without sails"'.[16] The Party Conference already mentioned constituted the official response to the crisis; Eisenstein made his thoughts clear in 'What Are We Expecting from the Party Conference on Cinema' (p. 100), the kind of statement of political identification that was itself already becoming expected of Soviet film-makers and that was to become *de rigueur* in the 1930s. His critique of the existing policies of Sovkino, the state cinema organisation, was elaborated in both 'For a Workers' Hit' (pp. 107-112) and 'The Twelfth Year' (pp. 123-126), which he jointly signed with Alexandrov. In this latter piece the authors reiterated the importance of a 'tendentious' cinema and argued the need for an improved training programme for young directors in order to overcome 'the unprincipled behaviour of our industry and its leadership' and ensure that 'we shall be able to meet the thirteenth October *with a fully armed Cinema October*.' Some of the elements of such a programme are to be seen in the interview entitled 'The GTK Teaching and Research Workshop' (pp. 127-129).

Eisenstein's principal concern was still as always the theory and practice of the film-making process. In a series of major articles in 1928 he re-examined the central tenets of cinema, moved towards the notion of 'intellectual cinema' and confronted for the first time the problems associated with the advent of sound. In 'Our *October*: Beyond the Played and the Non-Played' (pp. 101-106) he was defending his anniversary film against the thrust of the attacks made on it. Just as he had earlier argued that *Potemkin* should not be judged by the standards of *The Strike*, so he now argued that *October* should not be judged by the standards of his earlier work, but as a further stage on the path towards his next film. He compared *October* to the stage in life at which the male voice breaks:

> The voice has a habit of 'breaking' at a transitional age.
> At an age when you are growing. The transition to adulthood.
> *October* appears at a similar turning-point for cinema.
> *October* spans two epochs in cinema.

It represented the transition from the uttermost limits of the old forms to new forms that had 'by no means all yet been found'. *October* represented the transition from the old dichotomy between fiction and documentary film, between played and non-played, to a new and as yet unclearly defined stage 'beyond the played and the non-played' where 'cinema . . . stands on its *own two* feet with its own, admittedly as yet undesignated terminology'. We are back to the dialectic: thesis – antithesis – synthesis. In this dialectical process

> A theoretical novelty – the 'non-played' film – has in due course replaced plot by *fact*.
> Illusion by *raw material*.

But the new synthesis was characterised not by fact or raw material, but by what Eisenstein rather provocatively called 'CONTEMPT FOR RAW MATERIAL'. Using an analogy only slightly less dismissive of the Cine-Eyes than his earlier remarks, he observed:

> slaves of the machine are becoming masters of the machine.
> Slaves of raw material are becoming exploiters of raw material.
> If in the preceding period the material prevailed, the object replaced 'soul and mood', then the next stage will replace the presentation of a phenomenon (material, object) by a *conclusion* based on the phenomenon and a *judgment* on the material, given concrete form in finished concepts.

We are back here to the 'tendentiousness' of cinema, to its 'ruling ideology' and its 'final ideological motivation'. Attractions still worked through their chains of associations, objects were still 'psychologised', but what Eisenstein had on a previous occasion called 'the next tactical manoeuvre in the attack on the audience under the slogan of October' meant now that 'Cinema is ready to begin operating through the abstract word that leads to a concrete *concept*.' This was 'intellectual cinema' in all but name: 'The sphere of the new film language will, as it happens, not be the sphere of the presentation of phenomena, nor even that of social interpretation, but the opportunity for *abstract social evaluation*.' The paradigm of this 'abstract social evaluation' was to be Eisenstein's projected film version of Marx's *Capital*, but that film was never made.

Those who had felt unduly constrained by the limitations of cinema as a *silent* medium welcomed the advent of sound as a liberating force, but to the majority it was a cause of considerable trepidation. Some feared the loss of

their jobs, others worried about the destruction of cinema as an art form. The significance of sound was examined by Eisenstein and his colleagues Alexandrov and Pudovkin in their 'Statement on Sound' (pp. 113-114). Their principal concern was that sound would be used merely as an addition to images, creating the illusion of naturalism, destroying the 'culture of montage' and thus the autonomy of cinema as an art form by re-establishing the hegemony of theatrical methods ('"dramas of high culture" and other photographed representations of a theatrical order'). To avoid this 'blind alley' the writers argued that film-makers should experiment first and foremost with '*the contrapuntal use* of sound *vis-à-vis* the visual fragment of montage' with a view to enhancing cinematic language by 'the creation of a new *orchestral counterpoint* of visual and sound images.' We have seen from Eisenstein's comments on *October*, especially in 'Our *October*. Beyond the Played and the Non-Played', that he regarded that film in particular and cinema in general as having reached the limits of its old cinematic language. Used properly, sound offered a way out of the impasse:

> Sound, treated as a new element of montage (as an independent entity combined with the visual image) cannot fail to provide new and enormously powerful means of expressing and resolving the most complex problems, which have been depressing us with their insurmountability using the imperfect methods of a cinema operating only in visual images.

The 'Statement on Sound' left matters there: it fell to Eisenstein himself to pursue the argument further and this he began to do in 'An Unexpected Juncture' (pp. 115-122).

This article reflected Eisenstein's long-standing interest in Japanese art and letters, an interest which was regenerated by the visit to Moscow of the Kabuki theatre in 1928, when one of the actors demonstrated his techniques to the students in Eisenstein's GTK workshop. Eisenstein's vision of Japanese culture was, of course, an incomplete and, in many ways, a misleading one. He was fascinated by the conventions of the Kabuki, by 'the peculiar quality that manifests itself clearly during the direct *perception* of the performance and that no *description* has managed to convey to us'. The manifestation of this 'peculiar quality' appeared to echo his own experiments with the chains of associations that were linked to the montage of attractions:

> Here we find an *unexpected juncture* between the Kabuki and those extreme experiments in theatre in which theatre has already ceased to exist and has become cinema. What is more, it has become cinema at the latest stage of its development: *sound* cinema.

But the principal lesson that the Kabuki had to teach was what Eisenstein characterised as the sense of 'monistic ensemble', which appealed to him

because of his continuing concern with the overall direction and purpose of a work of art. In the Kabuki, 'sound, movement, space and voice *do not accompany* (or even parallel) one another but are treated as *equivalent elements*.' The Kabuki operates through 'a single monistic sensation of theatrical "stimulation"', using all the elements of theatre that contribute towards the end of the production: 'Addressing himself to the sense organs, he bases his calculations on the final *sum* of stimulants to the brain, ignoring *which* path that stimulation takes.' Each element was a 'single unit of theatre' in the same way that Eisenstein had defined the attraction in 1923. But the Kabuki had found a method for 'the transference of the basic affective intention from one material to another, from one category of "stimulant" to another', so that 'we actually "hear movement" and "see sound".' This transference could be effected not merely because the Japanese treated sound and image as 'equivalent elements' but because they had discovered the 'common denominator' between them. This was an essential precondition for the realisation of the orchestral counterpoint that was to preserve montage and thus the autonomy of cinema:

> In our 'Statement' on sound cinema we wrote about the contrapuntal method of combining visual and sound images. To master this method you have to develop within yourself a new *sense*: *the ability to reduce visual and sound perceptions to a 'common denominator'*.
>
> The Kabuki has this ability down to a fine art.

As we shall see, he was to develop these ideas the following year.

In January 1929 Eisenstein returned to the problem of the role of the script in the process of film-making. In 1924 he had argued in 'The Montage of Film Attractions' that 'The presence or the absence of a written script is by no means all that important' and that the script, like the other elements that constituted a finished film, was justified only by its utility in effecting the director's aims. In his interview with the *Berliner Tageblatt* in June 1926 he had stated:

> My artistic principle was therefore, and still is: not intuitive creativity but the rational constructive composition of affective elements; the most important thing is that the affect must be calculated and analysed in advance.

Now, in 'The Form of the Script', (pp. 134-5) he argued that the script was 'a stage in the condition of the material', 'a shorthand record of an emotional outburst striving for realisation in an accumulation of visual images'. The script, written in literary language, was like 'a boot-tree, preserving the shape of the boot when there is no living foot inside it', 'a bottle that is necessary only so that the cork can explode and the character of the wine foam into the

greedy gullets of the onlookers'. The script represented a blueprint for the director to translate into film language, 'a cipher communicated by one character to another', 'the cinematic equivalent of literary expression'. The script expressed 'the purpose of the experience that the audience must undergo': 'The script sets out the emotional requirements. The director provides its visual resolution.' The 'heart of the matter' lay in the 'tension or passion' that should be employed in order to exert the maximum desired effect on the audience:

> Let the scriptwriter and the director expound this in their different languages.
>
> The scriptwriter puts: 'Deathly silence.'
>
> The director uses: still close-ups; the dark and silent pitching of the battleship's bows; the unfurling of the St Andrew's ensign; perhaps a dolphin's leap; and the low flight of seagulls.
>
> The audience experiences the same emotional spasm in the throat, the same anxiety rising in his throat as that which seized the author of the memoirs at his writing desk and the director of the film at the cutting table or while shooting in the boiling sun.

The essence of the activity is the communication of that 'emotional spasm' to the audience: the end is the same, but the methods of the scriptwriter and the director are different.

In 'Beyond the Shot' (pp. 138-150) Eisenstein returned to the ideas that he had been exploring in 'An Unexpected Juncture'. He argued that Japanese script, with its use of ideograms – or, as he called them, hieroglyphs – had lessons for cinema:

> The point is that . . . the combination . . . of two hieroglyphs of the simplest series is regarded not as their sum total but as their product, i.e. as a value of another dimension, another degree: each taken separately corresponds to an object but their combination corresponds to a *concept*. The combination of two 'representable' objects achieves the representation of something that cannot be graphically represented.

Thesis, antithesis, synthesis. This was precisely the aim that Eisenstein had set out in 'Our *October*. Beyond the Played and the Non-Played': 'the next stage will replace the presentation of a phenomenon (material, object) by a *conclusion* based on the phenomenon and a *judgment* on the material, given concrete form in finished concepts.' There was no better way to achieve the aim of 'operating through the abstract word that leads to a concrete *concept*' than to employ the 'hieroglyphic' method of Japanese script, which was, in turn, effectively a montage of associations. This was 'the starting point for "intellectual cinema"'. In Eisenstein's analysis the hieroglyphic method of 'denotation through representation' involved 'splitting endlessly into two'. It

was the interplay between the two elements (both of the method itself and of each splitting) that created 'something that cannot be graphically represented', something akin to 'abstract social evaluation'. This led Eisenstein to challenge the Kuleshovian notion of serial montage, with each shot as an 'element of montage' building up 'brick by brick' to the construction of a sequence. He regarded serial montage as 'merely one possible *particular* case', in the same way as he had considered the illustrative use of sound as just one, not very exciting, possibility:

> The shot is by no means a montage *element*.
>
> The shot is a montage cell. Beyond the dialectical jump in the *single* series: shot – montage.
>
> What then characterises montage and, consequently, its embryo, the shot?
>
> Collision. Conflict between two neighbouring fragments. Conflict. Collision.

Eisenstein compared montage with 'the series of explosions of the internal combustion engine', separate 'fragments' combining into a 'dynamic'. But, if 'montage is conflict', then the shot, as a 'montage cell', had also to be 'examined from the point of view of *conflict*', in this instance of 'conflict within the shot'. He delineated various types of such conflict:

> the conflict of graphic directions (lines)
> the conflict of shot levels (between one another)
> the conflict of volumes
> the conflict of masses (of volumes filled with varying intensities of light)
> the conflict of spaces, etc.

He also identified: 'the conflict between an object and its spatial nature and the conflict between an event and its temporal nature.' This particular aspect of conflict within the shot owed much to Shklovsky's notion of 'impeded form' and his belief in *ostranenie* or 'de-familisarisation'.[17]

The range of different conflicts both within the shot and between one shot and another could all too easily cause a film 'to break up into antagonistic pairs of fragments'. This could be avoided by the discovery of 'a single system of methods of cinematic expression that will cover all its elements', by the exposure of the 'single indicator' that lay at the basis of that mode of expression. Here Eisenstein was returning to the lesson that he had drawn in 'An Unexpected Juncture': the Kabuki theatre had discovered 'the ability to reduce visual and sound perceptions to a "common denominator"', thus enabling them to achieve 'the contrapuntal method of combining visual and sound images.' Now the discovery of conflict provided the necessary denominator for cinema. In the instance of conflict within the shot this could be expressed

as 'the principle of optical counterpoint'. But conflict was not a new discovery for Eisenstein. In 1923 in 'The Montage of Attractions' he had implicitly recognised the significance of conflict in his assertion: 'These shocks [i.e. attractions] provide the only opportunity of perceiving the ideological aspect of what is being shown, the final ideological conclusion.'

Eisenstein's last concern in 'Beyond the Shot' was with the frame that actually surrounded the shot and here too he argued that the West could and should learn from the tenets of Japanese culture. Whereas in the West, or so he claimed, the film-maker began with the frame and then composed the shot within its confines, 'the Japanese do it the other way round': the image dictates the shape of the frame. The West 'staged' the scene, the Japanese 'captured' it, using the camera to organise the raw material, 'Cutting out a fragment of reality by means of the lens'. But, having reached this point in his argument about the frame, Eisenstein pushed it no further for the time being but turned instead back to the acting method of the Kabuki theatre. He called the method 'decomposed acting' because 'the whole process of the death agony was decomposed into solo performances by each "party" separately: the legs, the arms, the head.' It was quite simply 'decomposition into shot levels'. The analogy with cinematic montage was crystal clear. Eisenstein concluded that 'the most varied branches of Japanese culture are permeated by a purely cinematic element and by its basic nerve – montage'. It was therefore appropriate that cinema should learn from Japanese artistic practice.

In 'Perspectives' (pp. 151-160), also written in 1929, Eisenstein returned to problems of form and content, and to his attack on the supposed antithesis between them. Arguing that 'the role of the preacher has merged with the role of the artist. The *propagandist* has emerged', he confirmed content as 'the principle of the organisation of thinking'. Content dictated form, just as in Japanese art (according to 'Beyond the Shot') the image dictated the shape of the frame. Content and form were joined together by ideology, just as the montage of attractions had been given coherence by the 'final ideological conclusion':

> The *content* of a newspaper is the principle by which the *contents* of the paper are organised and processed, with the aim of processing the reader from a class-based standpoint.
>
> Herein lies the production-based inseparability of the sum total of content and form from *ideology*.

Similarly cognition and construction could not be separated because 'For us, to know is to take part':

> Cognition is construction.
>
> The cognition of life is inseparable from the construction of life, from its *recreation*.

Cognition involved the deconstruction and reconstruction of life, as already outlined in 'Beyond the Shot', through conflict, through a constant dialectical process of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. Using the analogy of music, Eisenstein argued for 'a mnemonic of *collectively* experienced *perception*' that would by implication lead to '*collective action*'. Through the process of the dialectic art had to achieve a new synthesis:

> The new art must set a limit to the dualism of the spheres of 'emotion' and 'reason':
>
> It must restore to science its sensuality.
>
> To the intellectual process its fire and passion.
>
> It must plunge the abstract process of thought into the cauldron of practical activity.
>
> Restore the splendour and wealth of gut-felt *forms* to the emasculated speculative *formula*.
>
> Give the clarity of ideological *formulation* to *formal arbitrariness*.
>
> That is the appeal that we are making. Those are the demands we are directing at the coming period of art.
>
> Which art form will be able to meet the challenge?
>
> *Purely and solely the medium of cinema.*
>
> *Purely and solely intellectual cinema, the synthesis of emotional, documentary and absolute film.*
>
> Only *intellectual* cinema will be able to put an end to the conflict between the 'language of logic' and the 'language of images'. On the basis of the language of the cinema dialectic.
>
> An *intellectual* cinema of unprecedented form and social functionalism. A cinema of extreme cognition and extreme sensuality that has mastered the entire arsenal of affective optical, acoustical and biochemical stimulants.

This intellectual cinema had an ideological purpose: 'the task of irrevocably inculcating communist ideology into the millions'. It was, in Eisenstein's view, destined to play a central role in the coming age of communism. This was not an empty phrase, nor was it a phrase put into Eisenstein's mouth by the authorities: he was and remained, despite his later travails, a convinced Marxist, a devoted Party member and a loyal Soviet artist until his death. His Marxism was central to his artistic life: the dialectic informed the way he thought and it informed the way he wrote.

It is therefore not surprising that 'The Dramaturgy of Film Form' (pp. 161-180) should have been given the alternative title 'The Dialectical Approach to Film Form'. This piece can be seen largely as a schematisation of the ideas that Eisenstein had already expressed elsewhere. He repeated his view that, 'In the realm of art [the] dialectical principle of the dynamic is embodied in CONFLICT.' It was the collision between the 'logic of organic form' (nature) and the 'logic of rational form' (industry) that 'produces and

determines the dynamic'. He reiterated the argument that 'both the whole and the minutest detail must be permeated by a *single principle*'. However the synthesis that montage represented 'is not an idea composed of successive shots stuck together but an idea that DERIVES from the collision between two shots that are independent of one another'. The notion of synthesis and of montage as 'blending' was therefore a 'vulgar description of what happens'. One new element was Eisenstein's analysis of the way in which 'each sequential element is arrayed, not *next* to the one it follows, but on *top* of it'. The retained impression of the first image (thesis) had a second image superimposed upon it (antithesis) and this produced a totality that was greater than the sum of the parts, 'a completely new higher dimension' (synthesis). He also analysed the nature of pictorial dynamism and, for the first time, the use of colour and concluded that the basis of dynamic effect lay with counterpoint or conflict. Film was essentially visual (or, in the case of sound film, audio-visual) counterpoint. There were three 'different *phases in the formation of a homogeneous expressive task*': formulation, conflict and explosion – thesis, antithesis, synthesis.

In further analysing the different kinds of conflict that might arise in film form Eisenstein borrowed from music the idea of the dominant as the principal sign of each shot, although he did not at this stage develop the analogy. He proposed what he, perhaps rather unwisely, called 'a tentative film syntax', a series of examples of the ways in which the film director could realise the 'emotional dynamisation' of the raw material. The concept of emotional dynamisation was itself a development of Eisenstein's earlier notions of 'ploughing the audience's psyche' ('The Problem of the Materialist Approach to Form') and of 'psychologising objects' ('Constanţa'). Despite his view, expressed in opposition to the Kuleshov/Pudovkin concept of serial montage, that the shot/montage relationship was not analogous to the word/sentence relationship, he was now arguing that film should use language, rather than theatre or painting, as its model:

> Why then should cinema in its forms follow theatre and painting rather than the methodology of language, which gives rise, through the combination of concrete descriptions and concrete objects, to quite new concepts and ideas?

Each montage fragment 'has in itself no reality at all'. It had associations and it was the accumulation of associations through the composition of the montage sequence as a whole that made it 'work emotionally'. The isolated word acquired meaning in the context of the sentence: the isolated shot acquired meaning in the context of the montage sequence. Intellectual cinema too depended upon the montage of associations and the final ideological conclusion. Citing the sequence of images of various gods from *October*, Eisenstein suggested that:

> The conventional *descriptive* form of the film becomes a kind of reasoning (as a formal possibility).
>
> Whereas in the conventional film the film directs and develops the *emotions*, here we have a hint of the possibility of likewise developing and directing the entire *thought process*.

Intellectual cinema, while 'still embryonic', would 'construct a really quite new form of filmic expression', which

> will achieve direct forms for thoughts, systems and concepts without any transitions or paraphrases.
> And which can therefore become a
>
> SYNTHESIS OF ART AND SCIENCE.

Once again Eisenstein expressed his intention of experimenting with this synthesis in his projected film version of Marx's *Capital*.

In 'The Dramaturgy of Film Form' Eisenstein had for the first time suggested that a montage sequence might derive its expressive effect from the conflict between the dominant sign of each shot within the sequence, in the same way that in music the dominant related to the scale. He developed this idea in 'The Fourth Dimension in Cinema' (pp. 181-194). This level of intensity of the conflict could range: 'from a complete opposition between the dominants, i.e. a sharply contrasting construction, to a scarcely noticeable "modulation" from shot to shot.' What is more this dominant could be 'more or less specifically defined, but never absolutely'. Each montage sequence took its general meaning from an indicator or signpost shot 'that immediately "christens" the whole series with a particular "sign"': each combination of dominants had its own dominant. The rejection of the Kuleshov/Pudovkin analogy between shot/montage and word/phrase was now complete:

> The shot never becomes a letter but always remains an ambiguous hieroglyph.
>
> It can be read only in context, just like a hieroglyph, acquiring specific *meaning, sense* and even *pronunciation* (sometimes dramatically opposed to one another) only *in combination with* a separate reading or a small sign or reading indicator placed alongside it.

But the dominant was, after all, only the dominant; there were other signs contained within the shot as well. Eisenstein claimed that *The General Line* (which was the film he had been working on since the completion of *Potemkin* and the project that he regarded as artistically more important than *October*) had been edited 'by the method of "democratic" equal rights for all the stimulants, viewed together as a complex'. In other words, in this film he had applied the Kabuki method of calculating the sum of equivalent elements on order to determine the overall effect. He applied the argument that 'a whole

complex of secondary stimulants always accompany the *central* stimulant' to both the acoustical and optical aspects of montage. These 'secondary resonances' (continuing the musical analogy) provided a whole complex of overtones and undertones to complement the dominant: 'This is the method on which the montage of *The General Line* is constructed. This montage is not constructed on the *individual dominant* but takes the sum of *stimuli* of all the stimulants as the dominant.' In a sense Eisenstein was now applying the methodology of the montage of attractions to the construction of the individual shot: thesis (tone/dominant), antithesis (overtone/undertone), synthesis (sum total/new dominant). Each shot was constructed on the basis of internal conflict, in the same way that each phrase of montage was constructed. But each shot, like each note in a musical phrase, was meaningless in isolation:

> Both emerge as a real constant only in the dynamics of the musical or cinematic *process*.
>
> Overtonal conflicts, which are foreseen but not 'recorded' in the score, emerge only through dialectical formation when the film passes through the projector or an orchestra performs a symphony.

This then was the significance of the 'fourth dimension' – time – in cinema.

Eisenstein offered the overtone as the long sought-after common denominator between sound and image in audio-visual montage counterpoint: 'Because, while a shot is a visual *perception* and a tone is a sound perception, *both visual and sound overtones are totally physiological sensations*'. It was the conflict between visual and sound overtones that, echoing the stipulation for 'orchestral counterpoint' in the 'Statement on Sound', 'will give rise to the composition of the Soviet sound film' and also provide the basic method for intellectual cinema:

> For the musical overtone (a beat) the term 'I hear' is no longer strictly appropriate.
>
> Nor 'I see' for the visual.
>
> For both we introduce a new uniform formula: '*I feel*'.

He then went on to analyse the four different 'methods of montage' that cinema could utilise: metric, rhythmic, tonal and overtonal. He made it clear that he regarded overtonal montage as 'an advance on the other stages': it therefore followed that *The General Line* marked for him an advance on his other films, just as *Potemkin* had earlier marked an advance on *The Strike*. 'Cinema,' he remarked, 'begins where the collision between different cinematic measures of movement and vibration begins.' This dialectic lay at the basis of what Lenin, in Eisenstein's paraphrase, had called 'an endless process of deepening the human cognition of objects, phenomena, processes, etc. from appearances to essence and from the less profound to the more profound

essence.' As the next stage in this process Eisenstein proposed the notion of 'intellectual montage'. Whereas overtonal montage depended on the stimulation of physiological reactions:

> Intellectual montage is montage not of primitively physiological overtonal resonances but of the resonances of overtones of an intellectual order,
>
> i.e. the conflicting combination of accompanying intellectual effects with one another.

Once more the justification for the means was the end: he had ended 'The Dramaturgy of Film Form' with a call for intellectual cinema as 'a synthesis of art and science', but he concluded 'The Fourth Dimension in Cinema' with a call for a synthesis of art, science and ideology:

> Intellectual cinema will be the cinema that resolves the conflicting combination of physiological overtones and intellectual overtones, creating an unheard-of form of cinema which inculcates the Revolution into the general history of culture, creating a synthesis of science, art and militant class-consciousness.

We are back yet again to the 'final ideological conclusion' that underpinned the montage of attractions in 1923.

A week before the publication of 'The Fourth Dimension in Cinema' and two months before the première of *The General Line*, Eisenstein, Alexandrov and Tisse left the Soviet Union in order to study the latest developments in sound film in the West. Eisenstein's reception was warmest in that other outcast country of the Europe of the 1920s, Germany: at least there his films were shown and his ideas treated with respect. After attending the Congress of Independent Film Makers at La Sarraz, he was expelled from Switzerland. When he lectured at the Sorbonne ('The Principles of the New Russian Cinema' (pp. 192-202)) the Prefect of the Paris Police banned the proposed showing of what was by then called *The Old and the New* at short notice. When he came to Britain he was greeted with the news that *Potemkin* could not be shown publicly because it was regarded as too inflammatory. When he arrived in the United States he was treated as something of a curiosity. The contrast between the attitude implicit in 'Rin-Tin-Tin Does His Tricks for Noted Russian Movie Man' (pp. 203-205) and the interviews that had been published in German newspapers and French and British journals provided eloquent testimony to the different cultural traditions that prevailed on the two sides of the Atlantic and should have furnished a timely warning of the almost inevitable conflict that was to come between the collectivist approach of Eisenstein and the individualism of the USA. His time in North America was no more fruitful in terms of completed writings than it was in terms of finished films: his only major piece was the lecture delivered in

Hollywood ('The Dynamic Square' (pp. 206-218)), which echoed the point made in 'Beyond the Shot' about the relationship between shot and frame and probably went over the heads of the audience to whom it was addressed. Having arrived in 1930 as a curiosity, Eisenstein was to leave the United States in 1932 after the collapse of his Mexican project, denounced as 'a sadist and a monster', as a 'Jewish Bolshevik', as a wastrel and a pornographer:[18] he returned to the Soviet Union in May 1932 as a frustrated artist and a bitterly disillusioned man.

He also returned to a different Soviet Union from the one he had left in 1929. Both the country and the cinema were in the throes of the cultural revolution that accompanied the first Five-Year Plan. Soviet cinema had been centralised into Soyuzkino in 1930 under the firmer hand of Boris Shumyatsky whose first priority was to produce a 'cinema for the millions', one that would be both popular and ideologically effective. Eisenstein had left as the undisputed 'master' but he had been abroad at a crucial period of transformation. There had been rumours, repeatedly denied, that he had intended to defect and his absence at a critical time for Soviet cinema increased the resentment that resulted from the petty – and not so petty – jealousies of colleagues envious of his previous elevated and apparently unassailable position in the iconostasis of Soviet art. He came back to find that the reservations expressed about *October* and *The General Line* had now hardened into open allegations of Formalism.[19] He returned, not as the 'master' but as the man who had not made a film for three years and whose last two films had been 'unintelligible to the millions'.

Eisenstein had therefore to re-establish his credentials as a filmmaker, as a film theorist and, above all perhaps, as a loyal Soviet artist. In 'Help Yourself!', published in October 1932 (pp. 219-237), he argued that the purpose of cinema should be 'to grip and not to amuse' the audience, the difference lying in the particular 'ideological premiss' that should underpin Soviet films but that was missing from Hollywood: he cited his disagreements over *An American Tragedy* as symptomatic of this difference. In the same month he was put in charge of the Faculty of Direction at the State Film School, GIK, and he attacked the practice of encouraging each student to produce a short graduation film, a 'little episode'. The need was for a collective approach; instead of 'pissoirs' the students would work together to produce a 'cathedral': 'The art lies in the fact that every fragment of a film should be an organic part of an organically concerned whole.' That organic whole was, of course, still the 'final ideological conclusion'. It was in 'Help Yourself!' that Eisenstein for the first time introduced the idea of inner monologue as an essential element of sound film, comparing it to the literary technique of James Joyce. Inner monologue made possible the revelation of the thought processes that were central to intellectual montage and that in turn was to form the basis of intellectual cinema.

It was, however, this idea of inner monologue that unleashed a further attack on Eisenstein, to which he responded in February 1933 in

'Pantagruel Will Be Born' (pp. 246-9). In his view, inner monologue provided a way out of the impasse in which sound cinema might find itself if it were unable to free itself from the theatricalism that he had warned of in the 'Statement on Sound'. Inner monologue would reconstruct dialogue along non-theatrical lines: 'In terms of both its quality and its stage of development it will stand in the same relationship to theatrical dramaturgy as does the thought process to ordinary walking.' Sound cinema would then presumably stand in relation to silent cinema as silent cinema had once stood to theatre: its next consecutive stage as a result of the dialectical process of development. In other writings of this period Eisenstein again returned to earlier themes: to the overriding importance of ideology in 'In the Interests of Form' (pp. 238-42), 'Through the Revolution to Art: Through Art to the Revolution' (pp. 243-5), 'For Elevated Ideological Content, for Film Culture!' (pp. 277-9) and 'On Fascism, German Cinema and Real Life' (pp. 280-4), to the relationship between script and film and the collective nature of film work in 'To Your Posts!' (pp. 250-7) to the dialectics of superimposition and juxtaposition in 'Georges Méliès's Mistake' (pp. 258-60).

Eisenstein was, however, still revising his ideas. In 'An Attack by Class Allies' (pp. 261-75) he recognised that Soviet cinema had reached a point where it was appropriate to abandon previous opposition to plot and script: 'At this particular stage we need plot. Just as at a different stage we managed without it.' But this did not mean that he had performed a *volte-face*. He had always recognised that plot had a certain role in the film-making process: now he was talking about 'new forms of plot-based cinema' which had overcome the weaknesses of Americanism and assimilated the achievements of the 'preceding stage of development'. It may seem surprising to find Eisenstein arguing in 1933 that the past should be assimilated, whereas in 1923 he had argued, in opposition to Lunacharsky among others, that the past should be rejected; but we should not fall into the trap of assuming that he had suddenly become an artistic conservative. One difference was that in 1933 Soviet cinema had a past to be assimilated, while ten years earlier cinema's past had been a bourgeois one.

Far from being conservative, Eisenstein launched an attack on Soviet films for their artistic conservatism, their theatricality in the use of both sound and actors, in 'Eh! On the Purity of Film Language' (pp. 285-95). He argued that the poor quality of the montage had led to disjointed and meaningless films. This was hardly progress:

> We must demand that the quality of montage, film syntax and film speech not only matches the quality of earlier works but exceeds and surpasses them. That is what the battle for the high quality of film culture requires of us.

He argued once more than Soviet cinema should learn from its own past, citing *Potemkin* as one example, and reiterated the importance at this stage of plot:

> Now Soviet cinema is historically correct in joining battle for plot. There are still many obstacles along the path, many risks of a false understanding of the principles of plot. The most terrible of these is the underestimation of the opportunities that a temporary emancipation from the old traditions of plot has given us:
>
> the opportunity to re-examine in principle and once more the bases and problems of film plot
>
> and advances in a progressive cinematic movement not 'back to plot' but 'forward to plot'.

These ideas were to be developed in the writings that are included in the second and third volumes of this English-language selection of his *Writings*. At this juncture Eisenstein held up one film as a model and that film was *Chapayev*.[20] It was also held up as the official model film because of its 'intelligibility to the millions' but for Eisenstein its significance consisted in its synthesis of the achievements of the first (poetic) and second (prosaic) five-year periods[21] in the history of Soviet cinema. As a synthesis of this sort it also 'opens the fourth five-year period in our cinema': 'It is not a return to the old plot forms that were filmed in the first stage of our cinema. It is not "back to plot". But "forward to a new kind of plot".' Forward to that final ideological conclusion, that 'great synthesis, when all the achievements of the whole preceding era of Soviet cinema in their uncompromisingly high quality become at the same time the property of the many millions of the masses, infecting them with the new energy of heroism, struggle and creativity.'

This has of necessity been a highly reductive account of the development of Eisenstein's ideas in the period to the end of 1934. For reasons of space I have had to leave a great deal unsaid and a great deal of what I have said unargued and unjustified. I have kept close to the texts that are included in this volume, partly because that is, after all, the function of an introduction, but also partly because at the present stage of Eisenstein scholarship it seemed to me that my most important responsibility was to demonstrate the consistency and coherence of Eisenstein's thought as it developed – and that could obviously only be done chronologically. That consistency and coherence can only be understood within the framework of Eisenstein's attempts to apply the Marxist dialectic to the problems of cinematic form, for it is the notion of the totality, the synthesis dialectically achieved, that gives meaning to the constituent parts. Just as the shot is composed from the conflict between attractions (later refined to a dominant tone and overtones), just as the montage sequence is composed from the conflict between the shots, and the film from the conflict between the sequences, so cinema itself develops through thesis and antithesis to a synthesis, which in turn becomes a new catalytic thesis.

The proper comparison is not between Eisenstein and Shakespeare: it is between Eisenstein and Lenin. One applied the tenets of Marxism to the

political conditions of Russia in the 20th century but his work remained unfinished: the other applied them to its cultural conditions – and his work also remained unfinished. But with this edition of Eisenstein's *Writings* in English we can follow his ideas chronologically as he himself developed them, we can see how his system of thought was developing towards its own synthesis and we can move closer to a proper understanding of his role in the cultural history of our century:

AT LAST!

RICHARD TAYLOR
Swansea, June 1987

Translator's Note

Transliteration from the Cyrillic to the Latin alphabet presents many problems and no system will resolve them all. Perhaps the most important is the difficulty of reconciling the two principal requirements of transliteration: on the one hand the need to convey to the non-Russian-speaking reader a reasonable approximation of the original Russian pronunciation, and on the other the necessity of rendering for the specialist an accurate representation of the original Russian spelling. There is a further complication in that some Russian names have a non-Russian origin or an accepted English spelling that takes little heed of the two requirements just mentioned. I have therefore used two systems of transliteration in this edition. In the main text and in the index I have used the generally accepted spellings of proper names (such as Lunacharsky or Mayakovsky) or the spellings that reflect their linguistic origins (such as Meyerhold, Strauch and, indeed, Eisenstein), whereas in the endnotes (at least where these names are inflected) I have attempted to cater for the needs of the Russian-speaking specialist. There the names listed above will be found as: Lunacharskii, Mayakovskii, Meierkhol'd, Shtraukh and Eizenshtein. There are inevitably some inconsistencies in this practice but I hope that the system I have adopted will clarify rather than confuse the issue.

Eisenstein was unfortunately not always consistent in his use of key terms and the reader should bear this in mind. In this and subsequent volumes the translator and editor have offered a particular version of a particular term but some degree of ambiguity, if not downright confusion, must always remain. When talking about 'plot' Eisenstein, like other Russian writers of the time, distinguishes between *fabula* and *syuzhet*, which I have normally rendered as 'story' and 'plot' respectively. Naum Kleiman, Consultant Editor on this edition, has offered the following distinction:

fabula: a Formalist concept, the structure of events, what actually happened, the facts.
syuzhet: everything connected with the characters, all the associations, motivations, etc. Formalist critics also used the term to include technical aspects of film-making such as lighting, camera angle, shot composition and montage.

Other problematic words include the following, and the reader is strongly advised to bear the alternatives constantly in mind:

kadr: shot or frame
kusok: piece or fragment or sequence of montage
material: material or raw material
montazh: montage or editing, the arrangement of the shots, frames or sequences through cutting. In Eisenstein's view, as in the view of others, it was

montazh that distinguished the specificity of cinema as opposed to related art forms such as theatre, literature or painting.

To minimise the risk of confusion, the original Russian word is occasionally given in square brackets [...] in the text.

Lastly, Russian does not have either an indefinite or a definite article and it is a moot point whether one sometimes needs to be supplied in the English translation. I have preferred *The Strike* to *Strike* as a translation of the title of Eisenstein's film *Stachka*. Similarly I have used *The Mother* rather than *Mother* for Pudovkin's *Mat'*, *The Earth* rather than *Earth* for Dovzhenko's *Zemlya*, and so on. I have done this in the hope of clarifying the meaning of the original Russian title for the English-speaking reader.

Abbreviations

agitprop	contraction of 'agitation' and 'propaganda', used for both the Party Agitprop Department and the activity
AKhRR	*Assotsiyatsiya khudozhnikov revolyutsionnoi Rossii*: Association of Artists of Revolutionary Russia
ARK	*Assotsiyatsiya revolyutsionnoi kinematografii*: Association of Revolutionary Cinematography
ARRK	*Assotsiyatsiya rabotnikov revolyutsionnoi kinematografii*: Association of Workers of Revolutionary Cinematography
FEKS	*Fabrika ekstsentricheskogo aktëra*: Factory of the Eccentric Actor
GIK	*Gosudarstvennyi institut kinematografii*: State Cinema Institute 1930-4
GIKhL	*Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury*: State Publishing House for Fiction
Glavpolitprosvet	contraction of *Glavnyi politiko-prosvetitel'nyi komitet Narkomprosa RSFSR*: Chief Political-Educational Committee of RSFSR Narkompros – the main censorship body 1920-30
Glavrepertkom	*Glavnyi komitet po kontrolyu za zrelishchami i repertuarom*: Chief Committee for the Control of Spectacles and the Repertoire – the principal organ of censorship for theatre and cinema
Goskino	contraction of *Tsentral'noe gosudarstvennoe fotokinopredpriyatie Narkomprosa*: Central State Photographic and Cinematographic Enterprise – the central state cinema organisation 1922-4
GTK	*Gosudarstvennyi tekhnikum kinematografii*: State Cinema Technical College 1925-30
GUKF	*Gosudarstvennoe upravlenie kinofotopromyshlennosti*: State Directorate for the Cinematographic and Photographic Industry, 1933-7
GVYRM	*Gosudarstvennye vysshie rezhissërskie masterskie*: State Higher Theatre Workshops
Komsomol	contraction of *Kommunisticheskii soyuz molodëzhi*: Communist Youth League
LEF	contraction of *Levyi front iskusstv*: Left Front of the Arts
LenARRK	the Leningrad branch of *ARRK*
Mezhrabpom	contraction of *Mezhdunarodnaya rabochaya pomoshch'*: International Workers' Aid
Mezhrabpom-Rus	joint-stock film-producing company that concentrated on producing films for the international market, 1924-8
Mezhrabpomfilm	film-producing company, 1928-36, based on *Mezhrabpom-Rus'*
MKhAT	*Moskovskii khudozhestvennyi akademicheskii teatr*: Moscow Art Theatre

Narkompros	contraction of *Narodnyi komissariat po prosveshcheniyu*: People's Commissariat for Enlightenment, headed by Lunacharsky 1917-29
NEP	*Novaya ekonomicheskaya politika*: New Economic Policy
ODSK	*Obshchestvo druzei sovetskogo kino*: Society of Friends of Soviet Cinema
OGPU	*Ob"edinënnoe gosudarstvennoe politicheskoe upravlenie*: Unified State Political Directorate, 1922-34 – secret police
Osoaviakhim	*Obshchestvo sodeistviya oborone i aviatsionno-khimicheskomu stroitel'stvu SSSR*: Society for Assisting the Defence of Aviation and the Chemical Development of the USSR
Proletkino	contraction of *Proletarskoe kino*: Proletarian Cinema organisation, 1923-5
Proletkult	contraction of *Proletarskaya kul'tura*: Proleterian Culture organisation, 1917-32
Rabkrin	contraction of *Raboche-krest'yanskaya inspektsiya*: Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate
RAPP	*Rossiiskaya assotsiyatsiya proletarskikh pisatelei*: Russian Association of Proletarian Writers, 1925-32
Repertkom	see *Glavrepertkom*
RossARRK	*ARRK* for the RSFSR
RSFSR	Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic
Sovkino	contraction of *Sovetskoe kino*: Soviet Cinema – centralised state cinema organisation, 1924-30
Sovnarkom	contraction of *Sovet narodnykh komissarov*: Soviet of People's Commissars, the ruling ministerial body of the USSR at that time
Soyuzkino	contraction of *Soyuznoe kino*: Union Cinema – centralised state cinema organisation, 1930-3
TsGALI	*Tsentralnyi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Literatury i Iskusstva*: Central State Archive of Literature and Art
Vesenkha	see *VSNKh* below
Vkhutemas	contraction of *Vysshie khudozhestvenno-tekhnicheskie masterskie*: Higher Artistic-Technical Workshops, 1921-6
VSNKh	*Vysshii sovet narodnogo khozyaistva*: Supreme Council for the National Economy, 1917-32